
White Liberal Educators as a Personified Double Consciousness

WRITTEN BY

Fernando Jimenez Luna

The processes of socialization and enculturation, through participation in social institutions, inform individuals at their youth of the regulatory social norms ascribed to function in a particular society. These social norms advise a personal Freudian superego within any individual, while these same regulatory social norms inform a sense of DuBoisian double consciousness when ascribed to racialized people in the context of a Canadian society. I would like to focus on my experiences within educational institutions, having had a majority of white educators and little to no faculty representation, as well as within the context of the Covid-19 pandemic – in which the absence of my interactions with white people has led to my realization of my own personal sense of double-consciousness in a larger social sphere. Together, the two theories influence my perception of self within society. While Freud's theory can describe regulations, DuBois' theory presents personifications of the regulating force.

Although my white teachers are in no way oppressive, currently in Western education, what is taught and how it is taught can limit diverse, non-Western onto-epistemologies while promoting capitalist values and social relations rooted in white supremacy. Weber described these capitalist values in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*,

those being: hard work, productivity, and profit-seeking through all means necessary. The spirit of capitalism has continued through time to be extractivist, exploitative, violent and selective of who can succeed based on racial, gendered and economic lines.

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Within the social sciences in particular, until recently, the discipline has focused on Western epistemologies and theorists that held a higher legitimacy over other forms of knowledge production. Thus, capitalism and education work in tandem to promote colonialism and assimilation. The effects of this continue to be felt in the classroom by racialized students in many contexts, however, I will focus on the social psychological effects I have personally felt that have come to light after reading the material from one of my courses.

Freud's conceptualization of the mind is separated by the id, ego and superego. The id describes the impulses and drives of

individuals which are not led by morality. The ego is the mediator between the id and superego. The superego directs individuals with morality and rationality. This sense of morality is taught through socialization and enculturation. Morality is culturally subjective and molded by social interactions. One of the sites that heavily influences morality and judgement is educational institutions as agents of socialization. In my personal experience, the superego was formed through interactions with white educators who were, in my eyes, beacons of morality throughout my developing years. They taught me respect, discipline, integrity, time management, productivity, responsibility, and other social behaviours that are expected of one in a capitalist society to conduct labour for a wage. The lack of racial representation in education made it seem as though these values were and are inherently embodied by whiteness.

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The worth of students is not only judged but celebrated by the level of success they have in following these norms. It is significant to note that these norms are influenced by capitalist, Western worldviews and embodied through time by white educators. This is enculturated in the name of liberal notions of social mobility, equality, diversity and inclusion which nonetheless hold stringent

power imbalances.

This sense of celebration and perceived promotion of equal rights makes it difficult to acknowledge, let alone contest, feelings of double consciousness that arise while being a racialized student in the Canadian education system. The approval and acceptance I received by my educators made me hesitant in writing this critique. I know that my educators have the best interest in mind – however, liberalism promotes participation in capitalist economies and assimilationist notions of equity, such as diversity and inclusion, that retain power within whiteness and colonialism while racialized and Indigenous bodies are in the room, but exclude the usage of culturally relevant pedagogy or Indigenous onto-epistemologies in curricula. Diversity in high positions of corporate and government spaces will not bring liberation; rather, it will recreate systemic power imbalances in which the former oppressed classes will become the oppressive ruling class. In this light, I recognize the harm these values can inflict in a society where social mobility is attained through power, prestige and status at the expense of marginalized bodies.

As DuBois describes in *The Souls of Black Folks*, double-consciousness is the act of viewing oneself through the eyes of the dominant class. Lack of representation leads to reproductions of racial power imbalances when racialized students perceive their worth, sense of morality, and themselves through the eyes of solely white educators. It is not the fault of one single educator – but rather the culmination of 16 years of being taught,

trained and evaluated by white educators, and the western ways of thinking which are legitimized and deemed formal, that lead me to view judgements of myself through their gaze and the gaze of whiteness overall. I have come to realize that my double consciousness is personified by white liberal educators. I envision morality, rationality, validity, rigour and success as my educators as they have taught me to hold these values in order to achieve success.

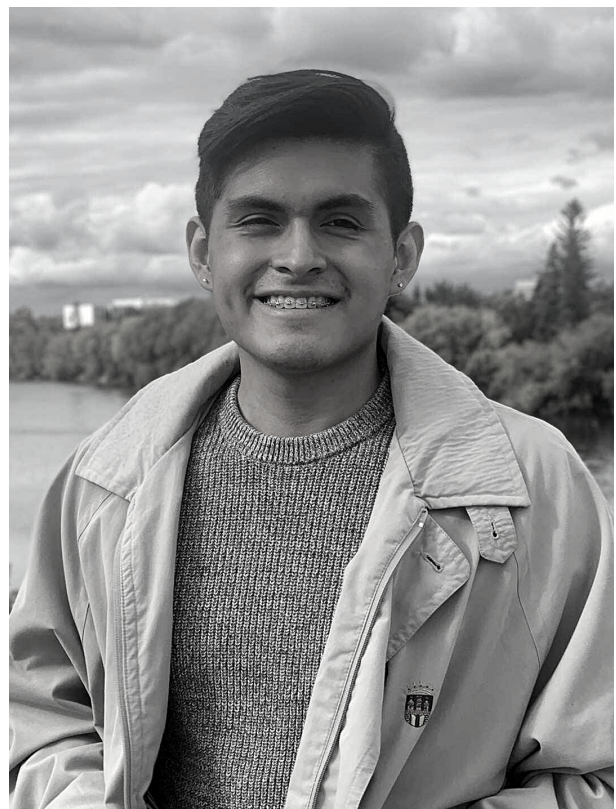
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The feelings of double consciousness were brought to light during the Covid-19 lockdown. It has come to my realization that being viewed through the eyes of white people is central to my experience and self-identity. My limited interactions with white people throughout the past 9 months have no longer made me feel "othered", a constant feeling I hold. With the absence of this feeling, I have come to know of its significance in how I view myself, how I navigate through space, how I interact with others, and – most importantly – how much my sociological thinking is influenced by resistance to whiteness and cis-heteronormativity.

As an agent of socialization, educational institutions develop youth in their formative years to participate in society by teaching morality and values which shape the superego. The lack of diverse representation

in education in Canada leads to a double-consciousness which is personified by white educators who embody the values regulated by the superego. In conclusion, representation and integration of culturally relevant pedagogy and Indigenous onto-epistemologies in curricula may remedy this.

Fernando is a 3rd year in the BSocSc Joint Honours in Anthropology and Sociology at the University of Ottawa. His interests are in social psychology, methodology and epistemologies, specifically how they may hold connotations of social power relations in the way knowledge is produced and distributed. He is active in his student government, holding the position of Vice President of University Affairs in the Sociology and Anthropology Student's Association. (SASA-AÉSA), as well as in the community as a member of the Ottawa-Vanier Youth Council. Fernando enjoys singing and dancing and is currently reading "All About Love" by bell hooks.



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